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ABSTRACT

The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, students, and the general public in Alberta, Canada with an overview of results from the January 1997 administration of the English 33 Diploma Examination. The information in the report is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports. The report notes that of the nearly 6,000 students who wrote the January 1997 examination, 93.7% of these students achieved the acceptable standard, and 6.3% of these students achieved the standard of excellence. The report provides statistical data and examiner's comments for the personal response to literature assignment, the functional writing assignment, and the response to visual communication assignment. It also presents statistical data, examiners' comments, and a discussion of examination questions on the reading portion that many students answered incorrectly. (KC)

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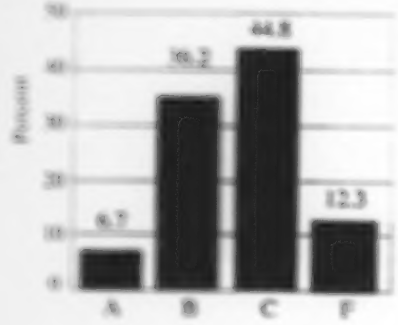
ED 408 603

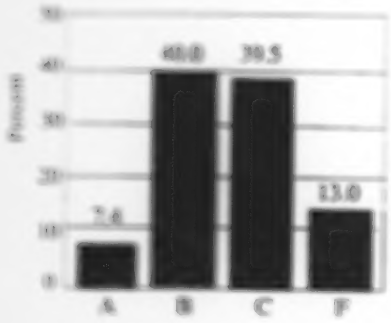
English 33

Diploma Examination Results
Examiners' Report for January 1997

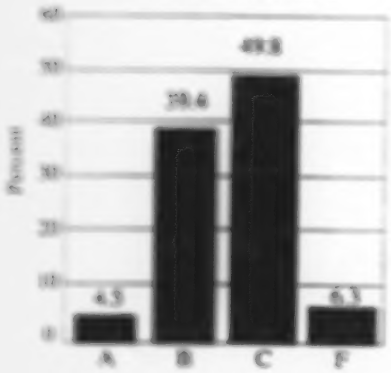
School-Awarded Mark



Diploma Examination Mark



Final Course Mark



The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, students, and the public with an overview of results from the January 1997 administration of the English 33 Diploma Examination. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that have been provided to schools and school jurisdiction offices. A provincial report containing a detailed analysis of the combined January, June, and August results is made available annually.

Description of the Examination

The English 33 Diploma Examination consists of two parts: a written-response section and a reading section. Each section is worth 50% of the total examination mark.

Achievement of Standards

The information reported is based on the final course marks achieved by 5 831 students who wrote the January 1997 examination.

- 93.7% of these students achieved the acceptable standard (a final course mark of 50% or higher).
- 4.5% of these students achieved the standard of excellence (a final course mark of 80% or higher).

Generally, student achievement in relation to standards in English 33 was satisfactory. The proportion of students achieving the acceptable standard was slightly higher than it was in January 1996 and June 1996. The proportion of students achieving the standard of excellence was slightly higher than the proportion in January 1996 but slightly lower than the proportion in June 1996.

Provincial Averages

- The average school-awarded mark was 61.6%.
- The average diploma examination mark was 63.0%.
- The average final course mark, representing an equal weighting of the school-awarded mark and the diploma examination mark, was 62.9%.

CS 415 515

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Part A: Written Response

In responding to Part A, students are required to complete three writing assignments, each of which assesses a variety of writing and thinking skills.

Readers will find the results most meaningful in the context of the assignments and the scoring descriptors. The most useful starting place for reviewing the results is at the (3) **Satisfactory** level. Such work exceeds the pass mark of 50%. The scoring criteria are provided in the 1996–97 *English 33 Information Bulletin, Diploma Examinations Program*.

The table below outlines the requirements for each assignment, the categories for scoring each assignment, the amount each category contributes to the total mark (Parts A and B combined), and the percentage of students achieving at the various levels. In January 1997, the average raw score for Part A was 29.5 out of 50.

By comparing school and jurisdiction results with provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint and Percentage Distribution of Scores

Description of the Writing Assignment	Scoring Category	Proportion of Total Mark (%)	Percentage Distribution of Scores									
			Excellent		Proficient		Satisfactory		Limited		Poor	Insufficient*
			(5)	(4.5)	(4)	(3.5)	(3)	(2.5)	(2)	(1.5)	(1)	
Personal Response to Literature The student is required to read a piece of literature and to write a response from a personal perspective.	Thought and Detail	10.0	1.3	1.9	12.3	14.5	39.9	16.0	11.6	1.3	0.9	0.3
	Organization	5.0	1.5	1.7	12.5	16.0	41.3	15.7	9.2	1.2	0.5	0.3
	Matters of Choice	5.0	1.9	1.9	13.3	15.1	43.7	14.3	8.1	1.1	0.4	0.3
	Matters of Correctness	5.0	1.8	2.5	12.8	15.1	36.4	15.6	12.2	2.2	1.1	0.3
Functional Writing The student is required to write a response to a particular situation (e.g., a business letter or speech).	Thought and Detail	10.0	1.4	1.6	10.1	12.9	40.5	18.0	12.5	1.4	1.1	0.5
	Writing Skills	5.0	1.4	1.7	10.6	13.0	38.4	17.7	13.7	2.0	1.0	0.5
Response to Visual Communication The assignment asks the student to respond to a photograph. The student is required to write about main ideas in relation to techniques of visual communication.	Thought and Detail	5.0	0.7	0.8	5.9	8.0	27.5	22.4	25.9	4.7	1.7	2.3
	Writing Skills	5.0	0.8	1.1	7.6	9.3	30.7	18.8	15.4	3.4	1.5	2.3

*Insufficient is a special category that includes students who did not attempt the assignment, who wrote too little to evaluate, or who wrote answers that were completely off-topic.

Note: The shaded portion represents the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded the acceptable standard on each scoring category.

Examiners' Comments

Selection I: Personal Response to Literature

The excerpt from "Reminiscences of a Canadian Film-maker" was accessible to most students and evoked many interesting and thoughtful responses. Most students agreed with the idea presented in the assignment box and developed their own variation of the thesis that "personal growth and confidence comes to those who can seek out a challenge or take a risk."

Students developed ideas such as "You will never know if you do not try," "To grow strong intellectually, one must experience what life has to offer," and "Venturing into the unknown and accepting risks can bring self-assurance, confidence, and personal growth." One student observed that "Those who seek an easy way without taking risks rarely rise to the top."

The students appeared to be engaged by the excerpt and appear to have admired Anne Wheeler's resourcefulness and indomitable spirit. In particular, many students were impressed by her ability to succeed in a field unrelated to her education, her willingness to journey to foreign lands, and her desire to take on projects with which she had little experience.

Most students commented on Anne Wheeler's experience as revealed in the excerpt and then recounted experiences from their own lives. This particular assignment elicited an interesting variety of personal experiences. Some students referred to school-related traumas (lacking confidence to participate in class discussions, challenging courses, moving to a new school). Other students talked about leaving their homeland and coming to Canada to live. A number of students described the rigours of the martial arts or challenges associated with other sports and recreational activities.

Many students used quotations judiciously and often effectively. They supported their views with quotations such as "there was a new sense of optimism in this country," "We had the sense that anything was possible, that we were free to explore the boundaries, that our place was secure and we could risk a few years to travel and mull over our life course," and "I enthusiastically dove in, not really knowing where the road would lead me."

Many students used examples from literature to support their opinions; for example, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Jurassic Park*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Ordinary People*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Hamlet*, *April Raintree*, "The Road Not Taken," and "The Scarlet Ibis."

Students achieving **(3) Satisfactory** demonstrated a defensible understanding of the reading selection and responded to the excerpt and the assignment in a conventional way. Students at this level typically formed an opinion, commented on the reading selection, and then used personal experiences and observations to support their opinion. At this level, more students than in the past referred to other literature or films. The organizational structure of responses at the **(3) Satisfactory** level was functional. These students had general control of the basics of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

Students achieving **(4) Proficient** and **(5) Excellent** understood, and responded to, the excerpt in a well-considered and even insightful way, understanding and responding to the subtleties of the excerpt. Their effectively organized responses included introductions purposefully designed to provide direction for the reader. They were able to choose words and manipulate syntax for stylistic effect, and they demonstrated competent and even confident control of Matters of Correctness.

Section II: Functional Writing

In January 1997, the Functional Writing assignment required students to assume the role of the Grade 12 representative on the Nalwen High School Students' Council. The students' council had asked its Grade 12 representative to speak at the Nalwen School Board meeting to be held on January 27.

Students were expected to write a speech that would persuade trustees to vote against a dress code proposed for Nalwen High School. In their speeches, students were expected to use an appropriate tone and to have considered suggestions from fellow students as well as other information collected by the students' council.

Most students used an appropriately courteous tone. Many students were passionate about this issue, and consequently, some students used a somewhat aggressive tone that was, nevertheless, appropriate, given the context of the situation. A rule of thumb followed by the markers was that it was appropriate for the student to be passionate, but not downright rude, about the issue at hand.

Most students understood the assignment; many students provided interesting responses. Some students offered compromises for the Nalwen School Board to consider. Many student wrote about the dangers of conformity, asserting, for example, that "the way one dresses reflects one's personality" and "The way we dress is the way we feel about ourselves." Many students wrote about the prohibitive cost of some of the proposed clothing (e.g., leather shoes), and some students commented upon the impracticality of some of it considering Nalwen's frigid winters.

Students achieving **3 Satisfactory** provided information sufficient to fulfill the purpose of their speeches. Using an appropriate tone, they identified the issue, stated their positions, used some of the information provided to support their positions, and provided closure.

Students achieving **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** sustained a precise awareness of audience and an appropriate, persuasive tone throughout. Their speeches included specific details that provided the Nalwen School Board with information that would have caused them to reconsider the dress code proposal.

It was encouraging to note that very few students appeared to have confused the context of a speech with the context of a letter by, for example, signing their names and adding "Yours truly." Generally speaking, markers were requested to disregard this type of slip and to consider fulfillment of function and appropriateness of audience awareness when they dealt with these responses.

Some students referred to the clothing listed in the dress code proposal as "uniforms." In light of the description of the clothing recommended in the proposal, this was considered by the markers to be appropriate.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication

The photograph on the January 1997 English 33 Diploma Examination was taken at Inglefield Fjord in Greenland. The setting of the photograph is barren and bleak. In the background, two men, probably Inuit, are standing on the ice beside their sled. They are seal hunters who are attempting to cross some open water with their dogsled team. It is apparent that they are dependent upon their dogs to take their equipment across the frigid water. The team of dogs is struggling its way through the water; the three lead dogs in the foreground have crossed the water and are climbing onto the edge of the ice. They are somewhat bedraggled following their plunge into the ice-cold waters. A man in the right foreground appears to be offering the dogs encouragement. There are sled tracks in the foreground suggesting that another sled has crossed the water successfully, and there is another sled and team of dogs in the far background.

Although some students appeared to have had difficulty in interpreting the photograph, many students responded thoughtfully with fairly lengthy compositions. More students than in the past attempted to form generalizations about the meaning of the photograph. Many students used the boxes entitled "Idea communicated" and "Support" that appear on the first planning page (page 23) to outline their responses.

The photograph generated a variety of approaches. Students developed generalizations such as "Life's obstacles may be conquered by cooperation," "Determination can help one accomplish a goal," and "Dogs will go to great lengths to serve their masters." Some students mentioned the importance of teamwork, asserting that "the dogs seem to understand that the harness on which they are all attached will hold the three lead dogs in the water, if they do not work together."

A number of students commented upon man's cruelty to animals. Many students commented upon the loyalty of animals to man, asserting that, "To the men, the dogs are more than dogs; they are companions in the trek across the cold wasteland."

Students achieving **3 Satisfactory** interpreted the photograph in a conventional way, using generalized details for support. These students tended to use details such as setting, and choices such as camera angle and focal point to support their ideas.

Students achieving **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** provided well-considered interpretations of the photograph. These students explained how the details in the photograph and the photographer's choices (for example, arrangement, perspective, and framing) reinforced their interpretations.

It is of some concern that 2.3% of the students who wrote the exam received no marks for Section III and that 34.6% of the students received two marks, or fewer, out of five for Thought and Detail on this section. It may be that some students are giving Section III less attention that it deserves because it is the last section of Part A and worth only ten marks. It is also true, however, that forming a generalization and supporting it with detail is a challenging task for many English 33 students. Nonetheless, forming and supporting a generalization is an important ability for students to have since it is basic to much of the thinking and writing that they will have to do as they meet their various futures.

Question-by-Question Results

Question	Key	Difficulty*
1	D	77.4
2	C	95.4
3	A	92.9
4	D	82.0
5	B	76.3
6	A	70.6
7	A	91.5
8	A	65.0
9	D	67.0
10	C	63.6
11	D	67.8
12	D	49.9
13	D	63.3
14	C	62.3
15	B	42.1
16	D	82.9
17	A	83.0
18	B	84.1
19	D	50.2
20	B	66.8
21	C	51.2
22	B	73.1
23	C	54.7
24	C	61.2
25	C	71.4
26	B	68.6
27	C	71.5
28	D	85.6
29	A	62.5
30	A	66.0
31	D	49.2
32	B	65.9
33	D	75.5
34	B	84.4
35	B	64.5
36	C	77.5
37	C	70.1
38	B	83.6
39	D	57.7
40	D	80.4
41	B	67.1
42	C	72.3
43	C	72.0
44	A	73.3
45	D	63.4
46	A	73.2
47	B	80.6
48	A	48.1
49	C	71.5
50	B	70.7
51	D	76.0
52	B	75.9
53	D	70.6
54	A	67.7
55	B	64.4
56	C	43.4
57	A	77.4
58	A	43.8
59	C	38.8
60	A	44.9
61	A	44.9
62	C	57.0
63	B	66.2
64	C	46.7
65	A	65.3
66	C	73.2
67	D	35.2
68	–	–
69	D	59.6
70	B	55.4

*Difficulty—percentage of students answering the question correctly

Part B: Reading

The table at the left shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. Parallel tables in the school and jurisdiction reports show the percentage of students who selected each correct alternative. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint

Part B: Reading has a value of 70 marks,* one for each multiple-choice question. Each question is classified in two ways: by the curricular content being tested and by the thinking (process) skill demanded by the question. The examination blueprint illustrates the distribution of questions in January 1997 according to these classifications.

	Classification by Thinking Skills			
Classification by Course Content	**Literal Understanding**	**Inference and Application**	**Evaluation**	**Total**
Meanings (Main Ideas/ Details)	18	2, 7, 8, 12, 16, 17, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 49, 56, 57, 58, 65	6, 11, 13, 23, 24, 27, 45, 47, 48, 59	30 Items (21.5%)
Relationships of Form and Content		10, 14, 15, 19, 20, 25, 46, 52, 53, 60, 67, 68,* 69, 70	5, 54, 55	17 Items (12 %)
Human Experience and Values		3, 4, 21, 22, 26, 34, 44, 61, 62, 63, 64	1, 9, 50, 51, 66	16 Items (11.5 %)
Knowledge of Revision and Editing	38, 39, 41, 42, 43	37, 40		7 Items (5 %)
Total	6 Items (4 %)	46 Items (33%)	18 Items (13%)	70 Items (50%)

*Question 68 was dropped from the examination before mark calculations were made. The total mark possible, therefore, was 69.

*Subtest Results***

Results are in average raw scores.

Total Part B: 46.1 out of 69

Course Content

- Main Ideas/Details: 20.2 out of 30
- Relationships of Form and Content: 9.8 out of 16
- Human Experience and Values: 11.0 out of 16
- Knowledge of Revision and Editing: 5.0 out of 7

Readers are cautioned **not to compare subtest results because the subtests are not of equal difficulty. Instead, readers should compare these provincial subtest results with their own school subtest results.

Examiners' Comments

Dropped Question

Question 68, one of a set of eleven questions on the short story "The Huntsman," by Anton Chekhov, was dropped from the examination before mark calculations were made.

68. The statement "Her eyes ran over the tall, lean figure of her husband, and caressed and fondled him" (lines 133 to 134) is effective because it creates

- **A.** pathos
- **B.** humour
- **C.** mystery
- **D.** contrast

Question 68 was keyed to "pathos." Less than 25% of the students who wrote the exam answered question 68 correctly, and, even though this question *did* discriminate reasonably well between students who scored high on the exam and those who scored low, it was decided that the question was too difficult for typical English 33 students and, therefore, unfair.

Detailed Discussion

The following table gives results for six multiple-choice questions. These six questions were chosen to represent the range of difficulty (35.2 to 95.4) present in Part B. They also represent all of the question types that appear in the blueprint on page 5. For each question, statistics are given for three student groups. The comments following the table address some of the decisions that students may have made and some of the skills they may have used to answer these questions correctly.

Percentage of Students Correctly Answering Selected Multiple-Choice Questions

	Question Number					
Student Group	**2**	**14**	**31**	**39**	**66**	**67**
All Students	95.4	62.3	49.2	57.7	73.2	35.2
Students achieving the *standard of excellence* (80% or higher, or A) on the whole examination	99.3	91.0	87.7	88.7	95.8	60.2
Students achieving the *acceptable standard* who received between 50% and 64%, or C, on the whole examination	95.6	52.7	35.4	47.7	65.2	28.0

Question 2 was one of a set of nine questions on the excerpt from "Vulcan" by Peter Behrens.

2. Which statement suggests that Duane has " 'been a truck driver before' " (lines 24 to 25)?

- **A.** " 'Thinks he got a good deal' " (line 21)
- **B.** " 'He was washing cars in PA' " (line 24)
- **C.** " 'he knows how to split-shift' " (line 25)
- **D.** " 'He says he wants to go up on the rigs and be a driller' " (line 26)

Question 2 was classified under the Reporting Category *Meanings (Main Ideas/Details)*. It was the easiest question on Part B and was answered correctly by nearly all of the students who wrote in January 1997. Fully 99.3% of the students who achieved the standard of excellence answered correctly; 98.6% of the students who scored between 65% and 79% answered correctly; 95.6% of the students who scored between 50% and 64% answered correctly, and even 82.5% of the students who failed answered correctly.

Nearly all of the students who wrote English 33 in January 1997 were able to associate the ability to "split-shift," as specified in the keyed response, with having experience as a truck dirver, as specified in the question's stem.

Question 14 was one of a set of eight questions on the poem, "The fish with a coin in its mouth," by Alden Nowlan.

14. The repetition of the word "perhaps" in lines 18 to 21 indicates that memories are often

A. realistic
B. profound
• C. indistinct
D. overwhelming

Question 14 was classified under the Reporting Category *Relationships of Form and Content*. To answer this question correctly, the student had to understand the meaning evoked (memories are often indistinct) by the repetition of a word—"*Perhaps* there is a band" and "*perhaps* the people are cheering or *perhaps* that is only how it feels." This question was of average difficulty, with 62.3% of the students answering correctly. It discriminated quite well: 91.0% of the students who achieved the standard of excellence on the exam answered correctly, 78.1% of those who scored between 65% and 79% answered correctly, 52.7% of those who scored between 50% and 64% answered correctly, and only 26.3% of those who failed the exam answered correctly.

Question 31 was one of a set of nine questions on the excerpt from "Battle for Your Brain" by John Leland.

31. In the context of lines 58 to 64, the use of the word "clutter" (line 62) suggests that the writer believes most television programs to be

A. meaningful in outlook
B. entertaining for their viewers
C. inconsistent in their approach
• D. indistinguishable from each other

Question 31 was classified under the Reporting Category *Meanings (Main Ideas/Details)*. This question was relatively difficult, with only 49.2% of the students answering correctly. However, it was answered correctly by 87.7% of the students who achieved the standard of excellence on the exam. It also discriminated well since only 22.0% of the students who failed the exam answered correctly. To be successful with this question, students had to take the time to reread lines 58 to 64 and to think about what these lines suggest about the contextual meaning of the word "clutter."

Question 39 was one of a set of seven questions that were designed to test students' knowledge of revision and editing. These questions were classified under the Reporting Category *Knowledge of Revision and Editing*. In answering questions such as this, students are required to make decisions about appropriate revisions to a piece of writing.

39. The combination of words from paragraph 2 that contains *two* errors in usage is

A. "were given" (sentence one)
B. "so on" (sentence three)
C. "threw me" (sentence five)
• D. "real good" (sentence seven)

Question 39 was a highly discriminating question: 88.7% of the students who achieved the standard of excellence on the exam answered correctly, as did 71.1% of the students who scored between 65% and 79%, 47.7% of those who scored between 50% and 64%, and 29.3% of those who failed. Essentially, students who failed the exam guessed at question 39: 20.0% of them chose A, 21.7% chose B, 28.6% chose C, and 29.3% chose D. The fact that this question was relatively difficult for students who scored below 65% on the exam is indicative of the problems with expression that many of these students experience.

Questions 66 and 67 were two of a set of eleven questions on the short story "The Huntsman," by Anton Chekhov.

66. The fact that Yegor believes himself superior to Pelageya is **most clearly** indicated in

A. " 'There's a fine pair for you!' " (line 94)
B. " 'It wasn't my fault we got married' " (line 96)
• C. " 'A huntsman marrying a cow girl!' " (line 101)
D. " 'You were not a serf—you could have refused' " (lines 102–103)

Question 66 was classified under the reporting category *Human Experience and Values*. It was a "best answer" question in that each of the alternatives was partially correct. To answer correctly, students had to weigh each alternative carefully and choose the alternative that *most clearly* indicated that Yegor considered himself to be superior to Pelageya.

Despite being a fairly complex question in terms of the demands it made on students, question 66 was relatively easy—73.2% of the students answered correctly. Most students could see that the contrast in Yegor's mind between the positive connotation of "huntsman" and the negative connotation of "cow girl" *most clearly* indicated his belief in his own superiority.

67. Yegor's concentration on the passage of the wild ducks (lines 107 to 109) is paralleled in

A. "Again there was silence. From a field which had been reaped there came the first soft notes of a song, which broke off abruptly" (lines 115–116)

B. "Yegor put his cap on the back of his head, made a clicking noise with his tongue to summon the dog, and went on his way" (lines 129–130)

C. "As though he felt the force of her gaze, he stopped and looked back. . . . He did not speak, but from his face and the thrust of his shoulders Pelageya knew he wanted to say something to her. She went up to him timidly, gazing at him imploringly" (lines 134–137)

• D. "She stood there pale and motionless as a statue, following closely each one of his footsteps. Soon the red color of his shirt melted into the dark color of his trousers and she could no longer follow his footsteps" (lines 141–144)

Question 67 was classified under the Reporting Category *Relationships of Form and Content.* It was the most difficult question on Part B—only 35.2% of the students answered correctly. It was even a relatively difficult question for students who achieved the standard of excellence on the exam since only 60.2% of them answered it correctly.

To be successful in dealing with this question, the student had to reread lines 107 to 109 to note the style and content of this excerpt—"Three wild ducks flew over the clearing. Yegor watched them, following them until they became three barely perceptible dots, and then they vanished on the other side of the forest far away." Then, the student had to compare this excerpt with the four excerpts given in the alternatives to see which paralleled lines 107 to 109 in style and content. Only those students who achieved the highest scores on the exam were able to detect that Yegor's concentration on and yearning after the ducks in lines 107 to 109 were paralleled by Pelageya's concentration on and yearning after Yegor in lines 141 to 144.

It is interesting to note that students who scored less than 65% on the exam essentially guessed at this question. The responses of students who scored between 50% and 64% were as follows: 26.3% chose A, 22.5% chose B, 23.2% chose C, and 28.0% chose D. The response of students who failed the exam were as follows: 23.8% chose A, 26.2% chose B, 28.6 % chose C, and 20.8% chose D. This question demanded a great deal of reading from the student. It may be that students who scored below 65% did not take the time to read the five excerpts from the short story included in this question as fully as was required.

Comparison of Students' Results on Parts A and B

While it is not intended that Parts A and B of the English 33 Diploma Examination be considered separate exams, it is interesting to compare the distribution of scores on the two parts of the examination.

	Part A	Part B
A	4.7%	20.6%
B	21.4%	38.1%
C	57.3%	25.2%
F	16.6%	16.1%

In January 1997, considerably more students were awarded scores in the "A" category on Part B of the examination than on Part A. The scarcity of scores of 80% and above on Part A does not signal a new phenomenon; in the past, few students have scored at this level on Part A.

For further information, contact Tom Dunn (tdunn@edc.gov.ab.ca), Gloria Malick (gmalick@edc.gov.ab.ca), or Elana Scraba (escraba@edc.gov.ab.ca) at the Student Evaluation Branch at 427-0010. To call toll-free from outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

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